

SACRAMENTO OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 205
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL 916/651-4009
FAX 916/327-1097

California State Senate

COMMITTEES

RULES
CHAIRMAN

DISTRICT OFFICE
1515 CLAY STREET, SUITE 2202
OAKLAND, CA 94612
TEL 510/286-1333
FAX 510/286-3885

SENATOR DON PERATA
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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January 25, 2007

The Honorable Marian Bergeson
Chair, California Transportation Commission
1120 N Street, Room 2233 (MS-52)
Sacramento, CA 95814

Madame Chair:

In recent years the legislature and each of the last two governors have enacted landmark legislation to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and to mitigate the ill-effects of global warming in California and around the world.¹

According to a report issued last March by the state's Environmental Protection Agency (Cal-EPA)², statewide more than 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in California come from the transportation sector. In the area of the state I represent, the Bay Area, it is estimated that more than 50 percent of greenhouse gas emissions emanate from motor vehicles. In its report to the legislature, Cal-EPA noted that strategies like smart land use decisions and increased transit availability "can provide substantial climate change emission reductions." The report called for incorporating such energy efficiency and climate change emissions reduction measures in state transportation and regional planning documents.

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) must play a pivotal role in seeing these measures included in state and regional planning documents. Section 14522 of the Government Code provides the commission with the statutory authority to "prescribe...guidelines for the preparation of the regional transportation plans (required by Section 65080 of the Government Code)." Regional Transportation Plans (RTP's) identify regional priorities that ultimately form the basis for requests for state funding through the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) process, as well as other processes that distribute state and federal transportation funds.

¹ AB 1493 (Pavley, Chapter 200, Statutes of 2002) and AB 32 (Nunez, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006)

² "Climate Action Team Report to Governor Schwarzenegger and the Legislature," (March, 2006)

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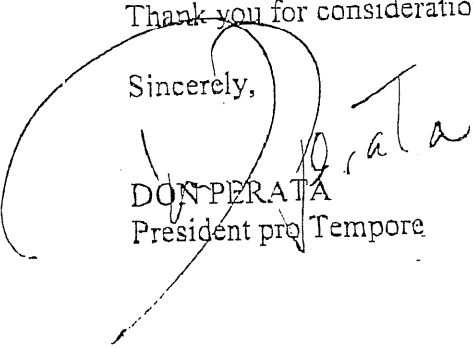
Today, neither the commission's guidelines nor current law require RTP's to achieve quantifiable reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, some suggest that the modeling used to produce today's RTP's does not accurately predict the benefits of the best strategies—like increased infill and transit-oriented development—to reduce vehicle trips and achieve greenhouse gas reductions. At a time when many urban areas in California cannot simply build their way out of congestion, land use strategies that reduce automobile trips are a necessary component in any sound transportation plan.

Herein, I request the commission use its current statutory authority to immediately begin a review of its regional transportation plan guidelines in order to incorporate the kind of climate change emission reduction measures called for in the Cal-EPA report. Your process should also ensure that the plans utilize models that accurately measure the benefits of land use strategies aimed at reducing vehicular trips. I would hope the commission could commence this review immediately, provide interim reports to the legislature regarding any necessary statutory changes, and issue revised guidelines in time for the next round of regional transportation plan updates. Legislation will likely be introduced this Session to make any necessary statutory changes.

The post-AB 32 era provides an important opportunity and challenge for policymakers in the area of transportation. The challenge here is to ensure the implementation of policies that accommodate the state's growth, while preserving those things that make California a great place to live—mobility, open space and clean air.

Thank you for consideration.

Sincerely,



DON PERATA

President pro Tempore